

Speech of

President Jacob Zuma

on the occasion of the second national conference of the

Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa

Walter Sisulu University, Umthatha



**THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

The Presidency, 6 July 2012



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Presidency, 6 July 2012

President Jacob Zuma

on the occasion of the second national conference of the

Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa

Walter Sisulu University, Umthatha

*Programme Director Ambassador Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya,
Convener of the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa, former Deputy
President of the Republic, Ms Baleka Mbete,
Honourable Ministers, Premiers, Deputy Ministers and MECs,
Provincial Conveners,
Esteemed Guests and delegates,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure and privilege this morning to address the second National Conference of the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa under the theme: "The Involvement of Women in the Economy".

The Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa is an important organisation in our country, as it brings women together for the purpose of contributing to building a national democratic society.

Given that women make up more than half of the population, the importance of this gathering cannot be underestimated. I thank you therefore, for inviting us to share this occasion with you.

Compatriots,

Promoting gender equality and women's active political, economic, and social participation is central to the work of the democratic South Africa.

We have always regarded women's emancipation as an integral part of the struggle for liberation.

Therefore, even in this period of freedom and democracy, women's emancipation must form an integral part of the political and the socio-economic transformation programme of our country.

The theme of this conference is both timely and topical as it follows on the heels of the African National Congress' (ANC) policy conference in which the issue of the economy and the role of women were discussed at length.

As the country marks the centenary of the oldest liberation movement in the continent, the African National Congress, I would like to take this opportunity to salute the scores of women freedom fighters and women who made untold sacrifices to bring about a free, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

The history of our struggle would definitely be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women such as Charlotte Maxeke, Lillian Ngoyi, Winnie Mandela, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Albertina Sisulu, Gertrude Shope, Ruth Mompati, Ruth First, Dorothy Nyembe, Forence Mkhize, Florence Mophosho and a host of others including Helen Suzman.

Their contribution will forever occupy the foremost place in our history.

Compatriots,

Following the 1994 victory and the ushering in of democracy, great strides have been made to recognise women and men as equal in the eyes of the law.

The Constitution of the Republic outlines that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. It also allows that

corrective action be taken to promote the achievement of equality for persons who were disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in the past.

This provision has been implemented through laws relating to affirmative action, black economic empowerment and affirmative action.

Our progressive Constitution also outlaws discrimination on grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

In addition to the Constitution, the need for gender responsive policies and programmes to facilitate the empowerment of women in all aspects of life is highlighted in various pieces of legislation and international instruments.

This includes the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Employment Equity Act, Domestic Violence Act, Maintenance Act, Sexual Offences Act and the Civil Union Act, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, as well as the African Union (AU) Gender Policy.

To further promote the legislative environment, we are to fast-track the Gender Equality Bill. This progressive Bill will promote the prohibition and elimination of discriminatory religious practises, and eliminate discrimination in access to socio-economic rights.

It will seek to prohibit harmful traditional practises. It will help eliminate and prohibit discrimination in employment and other opportunities for women.

The provisions of the Bill also already talk to the need for the participation of women in the economy and also full economic emancipation for women.

The legislation alone will not achieve our goals. This means that all of us, men and women, must actively work to promote women's rights as human rights.

It means that the Progressive Women's Movement must work with relevant government departments on an on-going basis to promote development and women's emancipation.

What is important is that all these new or amended laws and protocols indicate that the commitment exists and that we are moving forward with the promotion of gender equality. Some progress has been made already in many areas.

Today, more women are exercising leadership in politics and business. More girls are at school and more girls and women are accessing health care and can exercise their reproductive health rights, including family planning.

South Africa is amongst progressive countries of the world with a high representation of women in politics.

Data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) shows that out of 189 countries throughout the world, South Africa is ranked number seven in the IPU world ranking of women's political participation.

The large increase in the number of women now in our parliament and government has partly been the result of a progressive move adopted by the African National Congress on gender parity representation in political participation.

The representation of women in Parliament jumped tenfold from 2, 7 percent during the apartheid period to 27 percent after the historic first democratic elections of 1994.

After the adoption of the 50/50 gender parity at the 2007 Conference of the ANC, women representation increased to 44 percent.

Unfortunately, women's representation in local government decreased from 40 to 38 percent after the 2011 elections.

The country missed the opportunity at these elections to advance local government towards a 50/50 gender parity because some political parties did not feature an adequate number of women in their candidate lists for local government.

Government's goal is to achieve the 50/50 gender parity by 2015 as required by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. This requires all political parties to champion this cause.

As the public sector advances, the private sector is still lagging behind. According to the 2011 Women in Corporate Leadership Census of the Business Women's Association, women hold only 4.4 percent of CEO or managing director positions, 5.3 percent of Chairperson positions, and 15.8 percent of all directorships.

We trust that organisations such as Business Unity SA and Black Business Council will look intensively on the gender question in business and assist the country to move towards the 50/50 parity as required.

Compatriots,

We must remember as well that gender equality is not just about opening up opportunities in leadership positions for women.

It is also about improving the quality of life of women in general and recognising women's rights as human rights.

Therefore, it is of concern to us that poverty inequality and unemployment still affects women and the youth intensively.

As you deliberate in this conference, we trust that you will be able to identify activities and programmes in which the participation of women will have a meaningful impact, to respond to the triple challenges.

Our primary weapon against poverty is the creation of decent work.

For that reason, we are in the process of transforming the economy to promote labour absorbing growth.

Sizama ukulungisa umnotho wezwe ukuze ube umnotho okungangena noma ubani kuwo ikakhulukazi amakhosikazi, akwazi ukuvula amabhizinisi.

Lengqunguthela yomame kufanele ixoxisane ngaloludaba lokuthi omama bangalibamba kanjani iqhaza emnothweni wezwe.

We introduced the New Growth Path in 2010 to boost economic growth and job creation in some key sectors of the economy including tourism, agriculture and infrastructure development. The infrastructure programme is worth more than 800 billion rand over the next few years.

It originated from discussions held in the Cabinet Lekgotla of July 2011, which established the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission and its various structures.

The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission was tasked with researching the infrastructure needs of the country and developing proposals and infrastructure development plans to present to the President. Out of this process

came the proposals we made in the State of the Nation Address and the subsequent Budget of 2012.

The Infrastructure plan addressed the need to develop a comprehensive plan to address the legacy of apartheid spatial planning by integrating those parts of the country – rural areas in particular – which had been historically excluded from economic development.

The Plan also spoke to the need for infrastructure development to lead the struggle against the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and quality. The conceptual work has been done.

The outcome is that 17 major long-term Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) have been developed with planned major positive effects on regional economies and job creation.

Now that the conceptual work has been done, the infrastructure roll-out must address a few priorities.

It must trigger sustainable economic growth that begins to address the triple challenge of poverty unemployment and inequality.

In practical terms, for social infrastructure, the end result must be infrastructure that builds dams and power stations so that we can get improved access to water and electricity.

In that way, women in rural areas will no longer have to carry water over long distances. Economic infrastructure must improve the railway lines, ports or airports and make it easier for goods and people to move around, promoting economic activities and exchanges.

Sifuna kwakhiwe imigwaqo ezindaweni zasemakhaya ukuze omama bangehliswa amabhasi namatekisi kude nasemakhaya bathwale imithwalo ekhanda indawo ende.

The infrastructure programme uses labour intensive methodologies to ensure more jobs; and to build in skills development to enhance the quality of those jobs.

Another key principle is that the infrastructure programme must support the development of black and emerging contractors especially women.

This also applies to our expanded public works programme. For example, there are benefits in the Department of Transport's Sihamba Sonke Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Programme, which will create at least 70 000 jobs.

The intention is that 70 percent of those jobs should go to women and the youth, and the opportunities of running the projects should also favour women and the youth.

We must also bear in mind other government programmes promoting women farmers, women in construction, mining, technology and a host of others which provide opportunities for the entry of women into the mainstream economy. Small business development also provides opportunities for women's meaningful participation in the economy.

In April this year government launched the new Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA). The new agency consolidates Khula Finance, the SA Microfinance Apex Fund, and the Industrial Development Corporation small business lending book. SEFA will offer loans initially up to R3 million.

By reducing the number of agencies, we estimate annual savings in excess of R20 million through cutting the duplication of costs and services. That money can be redirected to support more small businesses enterprises rather than the bureaucracy.

This means we can cut costs and still provide an improved one stop shop funding service to small businesses.

There would be a need to engage the new institution and other similar service providers to ensure that their services take into account the needs of women, for example the need for women to obtain finance.

Compatriots,

A key contribution to the development of small business by government would be to succeed in improving government's ability to pay suppliers on time, within the prescribed 30 day period.

We know that this has been a serious challenge to business over a long period of time, especially the small businesses run by women.

Given that non-compliance with the 30 day payment period had reached alarming levels, we decided to have this addressed at the highest levels of government.

The Presidency and the National Treasury monitor compliance on a month to month basis to impress upon departments the importance of compliance with this prescript.

It cannot be the progressive government that is responsible for stifling the growth of small businesses.

Compatriots,

Let me remind you all that the United Nations has declared 2012 an International Year of Co-operatives.

This is in recognition of the fact that co-operatives make a significant contribution to job creation and reduce unemployment and inequality in society, particularly that of women and young people, who bear the brunt of economic marginalisation.

We can learn from the famous internationally recognised social enterprise model pioneered by Professor Muhammad Yunus– the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

The model has been replicated in many parts of the world and given many women a foothold out of poverty into the economic mainstream. Locally, departments report an increase in the number and registration of cooperatives in the last ten years.

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, there are currently more than 54 000 registered cooperatives throughout the country. In order to enhance sustainability and realise the potential of cooperatives for national development in South Africa, government has decided to provide hands on support.

We have decided to create an enabling legislative and regulatory environment that underscores the important role of cooperatives.

These include the Cooperatives Development Policy, the Cooperatives Act and the Integrated Strategy on the Development and Promotion of Cooperatives, the Cooperatives Bank Act and the development of provincial strategies to promote and support cooperatives.

In addition to increasing the financial allocation for the Cooperative Incentive Scheme, government will also establish the Cooperative Development Agency that will ensure that financial and non-financial support is more readily available to cooperatives.

While the Agency will enable cooperatives to access funding, the proposed Cooperatives Tribunal will assist cooperatives in addressing and resolving the conflicts within their organisations and will provide management support.

There are many more examples of opportunities for women in the economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

All said and done, the most critical emancipatory tool is education. Our third country report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to the United Nations indicated our success in promoting universal access to primary education.

We have reached the target before 2015 deadline. This demonstrates that we are on track to achieve or even exceed this MDG target.

What is more impressive with the achievement of this target is that the proportion of girls attending primary, secondary and tertiary education has improved significantly, with the participation of girls being one of the highest in the world.

The attainment of the MDG target on education is significant for a number of reasons. Education is central to development and can serve as a catalyst to address gender disparities.

Moreover, education is the primary vehicle by which vulnerable children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate meaningfully in the economy.

Similarly, the report indicated progress in the expansion of health services.

However the report cautioned that the increased access to health services did not necessarily translate into better health outcomes.

While we have best practice policies to enhance the health of children and women, our inherent health systems problems, exacerbated by the HIV and AIDS pandemic resulted in persistently high mother and baby mortality rates, which government is currently focusing on addressing.

Improving access to quality health-care services is therefore a key national priority. The National Health Insurance scheme is a welcome intervention indeed with regards to dealing with inequalities in the health system.

Compatriots,

As government, we value the existence of the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa. The establishment of this organisation provides a united front with which government can engage on issues affecting women across political divides.

We would like to see relationships developing between the movement and government departments tackling all the issues that affect women, from water and electricity provision to the ownership and management of the economy.

We look forward to the outcome of this conference as it will certainly assist government to take forward the gender equality imperatives for our country.

The struggle continues. Lillian Ngoyi warned us as such when addressing the third Federation of South African Women Conference in 1961. She said "Freedom does not come walking towards you - it must be won. As women we must go on playing our part."

I wish you a successful conference.

I thank you.

Issued by: [The Presidency](#)

6 Jul 2012

Course: No Woman, No Revolution

14103a, President Zuma, Speech to Progressive Women's Movement, 2012

2760 words